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THE COLOMBIAN TREATY—RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

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Manifest destiny, or some phase of diplomatic drifting even less benign, has established the hegemony of the United States in the Caribbean. At a time when this phrase was more commonly used than it is today, Mexico, Central America, and the Spanish Antilles recognized its implication and anticipated in immediate or prospective cession the territorial sacrifices they must make to appease it. Mexico forthwith paid her share—the bitter price, as well of domestic anarchy; but fortunately for all concerned, Cuba and Nicaragua in the fitful fifties repelled the more irregular advances of the filibuster. Even then fate pointed to Panama as a goal post in American expansion. Our position on the Pacific, not to mention further encroachments in the Caribbean region, made inevitable our control of this, the best of isthmian highways.

New Granada, as Colombia was then called, was not slow to recognize the impending “Yankee peril” and endeavored to forestall it by negotiation. That nation wished to preserve her territorial rights on the isthmus and to realize for herself a goodly share of its strategic and commercial possibilities. To secure these ends she was ready to divide the transportation facilities of the region with another power, whose needs might be more pressing than her own, even if the other’s rewards promised to be correspondingly greater. Great Britain was a conceivable grantee, with resources sufficient for necessary constructive tasks, but she was a European power, whose recent encroachments on the Mosquito Coast deterred closer intimacy. Contemporary operations of the United States in Mexico, had not fully disclosed our policy. Propinquity, prospective devel-

opment, apparent similarity in political aims and institutions, and hitherto unbroken friendship caused Colombian statesmen to prefer an arrangement with the United States. They may have hoped by timely concessions to appease our appetite for territory, as Spaniard and Mexican before them had hoped, but as the sequel proved, equally in vain.

Thus the Panama Railroad, the immediate prize, became an American undertaking. Constructed under the treaty of 1846, which Colombia then made with us, it later brought to the South American republic the substantial annual rental of a quarter million dollars. It also afforded the United States easier access and greater security to her Pacific Coast. Colombia was not content with these mutual advantages and twice within the next thirty years tried to interest her northern associate in the more important project for a canal. Anglo-American diplomacy and our Civil War at first prevented favorable response, and later the completion of transcontinental railroads seemed to render a canal unnecessary. Discouraged by the apathy of the American people and the skepticism or indifference of American officials, Colombia, in 1878, accepted the Wyse-De Lessups contract for constructing the "Strait of Panama." This recourse to European aid provoked some unexpected references to the Monroe Doctrine, but otherwise the American people seemed willing to let French promoters waste their money in a tropical wilderness, if that suited them.

In 1898, the American people lost their skepticism or indifference. Three years before in President Cleveland's Venezuelan message, South American states noted a new development in Caribbean politics. Possibly its most disquieting phase was Secretary Olney's blunt statement that the United States "is practically sovereign on this continent and its fiat is law upon the subjects upon which it confines its interposition." This dictum aroused an apprehension that more than offset the advantage gained from arbitrating the important territorial dispute involved. Moreover, the acquisition of Porto Rico and the attempt to buy the Danish Isles; the protectorate over Cuba; the agitation

for an isthmian canal on the ground of national defense; and the Rooseveltian interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine during the second Venezuelan controversy increased their foreboding. The United States was now a Caribbean as well as a continental power, to whom Panama seemed more necessary than ever.

At the same time, Colombia, legal possessor of the coveted area, emerged from the most disastrous civil war in her tumultuous history. She had paid a toll of one hundred thousand lives for the doubtful privilege of ecclesiastical and political reaction. Her debt was quoted in fabulous figures. Her circulating medium was a mass of depreciated paper, supposedly current at a rate in gold varying from one hundred to one thousand for one. Industry was at a standstill, production retarded, and credit gone. Worst of all, the reactionary group with which her public men were mostly identified, had achieved bitter victory through general exhaustion, and this condition exposed them more than usual to crookedness and double dealing. In the midst of the conflict private greed and public necessity had led a hard pressed government to accept from the New French Canal Company (as it was popularly called) a bonus of five million francs. In return it granted the company an extension of its franchise from 1904 to 1910.

This was the second extension granted since the original contract. It was regarded as of doubtful validity because never approved by Congress. Besides failing to obtain this approval the administration ignored its agent, then in Paris, who later claimed that he could have made better terms or else forced the bankrupt concessionaires to withdraw altogether, leaving on the Isthmus whatever tangible assets they possessed. Then might Colombia have made a favorable treaty with the United States, now the sole possible grantee. He seems to make out a good case against his superiors and many of his fellow countrymen believed that their action amounted to a betrayal of the country's interest.

Those who defend without question the "taking" of Panama evidently fail to consider the predicament in which

Colombia then found herself. Without money, credit, and efficient and unselfish public servants; without immediate hope of material or moral recovery, her condition called for sympathetic dealing, not despoilment. At the same time a due regard for our own interests and for national honor required a careful scrutiny of what the Canal Company had to offer. A prominent item was the Panama Railroad from which Colombia derived an annual rental and to which she had by contract a reversionary right. The company had leased the railroad for a period of years, but could not give a clear title to it. That formality the newly created Republic of Panama assumed. After some twenty years of waste, looting, and ineffectual combat with the tropics, the company could also offer some valuable salvage, some useful excavation, and an extended contract of doubtful validity. In view of this showing, it is no wonder that the agents of the French Company required several years of persistent lobbying to convince Congress and the American public that as a canal route Panama was superior to Nicaragua.

In reality we paid for Mr. Roosevelt's preference for Panama. Doubtless it was worth the price but we have not wholly liquidated the contingent account. Men in high station gave pledges—unofficial, it is true, but reassuring—that the United States would support rebellion in Panama. At the opportune moment our war vessels appeared off Panama City and Colon, under instructions to check any interference with a revolution that had not yet started. Our marines and blue jackets later landed at those ports and prevented loyal Colombian officers from suppressing a farcical uprising when it was barely under way. Ugly stories were current, about the methods employed to bribe Panamanian authorities or to cajole them into accepting the revolt as a *fait accompli*. It is unnecessary to discuss these occurrences or to review the charges of still darker preliminary intrigues at Paris, New York, and Washington—charges that implicate our own officials. The unprejudiced observer is forced to conclude that the Panama Republic, so promptly recognized, was a mere

holding corporation, created and maintained to legalize the indirect seizure of the Canal Zone. He does not need any subsequent confession about "taking" Panama to raise a presumption of regrettable collusion in the process.

In playing their part in this farce our officials lost sight of that article in our treaty with Colombia by which we guaranteed her territorial integrity. But they did not fail to pervert the meaning of another section of the same treaty to justify the prompt landing of our forces on Colombian territory. They also ignored the obligation resting on the Canal Company to obtain the consent of Colombia before transferring its rights and privileges to another. In this respect Roosevelt was no more reprehensible than was Jefferson a hundred years before, in accepting Louisiana, with its clouded title, from Napoleon. Each of these great transactions has been of transcendent importance to our country, but both, let the candid admirer admit, contain features that are indefensible.

We cannot clear ourselves of responsibility by attempting at this late day as another chief actor does, to brand Colombian opposition as pro-German. That is too obvious an afterthought to necessitate refutation. Nor is it truthful or seemly to refer to the authorities of that republic as a set of blackmailers and bandits. There are individuals of unsavory record in her public life, as in all other countries, but there is no credible evidence that any responsible official sought to confiscate the rights of the New French Canal Company in order to gain the entire sum that the United States expected to pay. On the other hand the French corporation, within a week after the treaty with Panama was signed, virtually confiscated fifty thousand shares of stock that Colombia held. This action and the preliminary lobbying of its agents would seem to justify a switching of epithets.

Among well informed Colombians of the period there was a general agreement that in return for their consent to the transfer, they might reasonably ask the company for twenty-five per cent of the anticipated forty millions. Shortly before, when the Nicaragua route was in the ascendancy,

the company was reported as willing to sell its assets for six millions. Colombia alone possessed the legal sanction that might raise the assets and goodwill of the company six fold in value. The expectations of her statesmen, then, were not preposterous, nor their later bitter denunciation of our officials entirely beside the point. Their country was despoiled and dishonored, and in their grief and rage they naturally attributed the worst possible motives to those who seemed most clearly implicated in the wrong done them. If they called our action a prostitution of national power in order to save the Canal Company a few "dirty millions," can we greatly blame them?

Nor is there better evidence to support the charge that the Colombian authorities expect to extort an enormous additional sum from the United States. They might justly ask if our offer of ten millions was enough for the privileges we demanded. The isthmian highway was their greatest single asset, brought to their country, it is true, by the voluntary act of Panama decades before. Neither they nor their predecessors had done much to develop the region in which it lay, yet it formed part of the national domain. They were asked to surrender sovereign rights over land and people and to give up immediate and prospective rights in a railroad that represented a value of more than thirty millions.

In addition to this material sacrifice—only recompensed in part by the ten millions and the rental (to be resumed after nine years) the Colombian government was required to surrender its sovereignty in the Canal Zone. This stipulation gave the officials more concern than the fiscal phases of the treaty. Alienation of territory—such it would prove to be—was clearly contrary to their constitution. No mere legislative action could meet the difficulty. In Hispanic-America, as elsewhere, the politicians seldom give undue weight to constitutional inhibitions, when they can count on safe majorities. The Conservative administration faced defection in its own ranks, to say nothing of Liberal opposition, if it moved too precipitately in this delicate negotiation. It needed time to arrange for the concession

in a more acceptable way. When this was peremptorily refused, like true sons of Don Quixote, they resentfully closed their eyes to any possible consequences, rejected the Hay-Herrán Treaty, and adjourned without presenting any counter-proposition.

It is possible to criticise these legislators, as does one now high in Colombia's councils, for their romantic attitude and for failure to interpret rightly the conditions that confronted them. Despite their inaction and the claims of other sections, they felt sure that Panama would be selected for the canal route. They may have doubted the continued loyalty of the Panamanians, but they evidently had no doubt concerning the patience and forbearance of the American administration. They certainly did not realize all the hazards of the game they were playing. At some point national honor, even though honestly invoked, must give way to a sort of right of eminent domain. To this right President Roosevelt was ready to appeal and in the first draft of his annual message proposed to urge Congress to take forcible possession of the isthmus before renewing negotiations with Colombia. The train of events then developing in Paris and Washington, New York and Panama, seemed to point out an easier way and one more plausibly defended.

Occasionally one encounters a loyal Colombian who feels that his representatives were guilty of something more than a display of romantic resentment. The acting president, for political reasons they say, appointed as governor of Panama a man whom he knew would betray the trust. The story of the revolt and the apparent complicity of the United States, led all Colombians, without distinction of party, to volunteer for the recovery of Panama. When the secretary of war for some unknown reason failed to equip them or provide means to transport them to certain defeat by the Yankee fleet there was an outcry against his loyalty. The volunteers from the northern departments started on a sort of mediaeval crusade towards Panama and died by hundreds in the swamps that intervened between their goal and the Atrato. Foolish was their

manifestation, but it was the voluntary sacrifice of a devoted people. Not thus do blackmailers and brigands act.

Other Colombians have assured the writer that there is little foundation for these accusations. A mass of testimony relating to the governor and secretary was later collected by a Colombian congressional committee, headed by a former senator, who renounced his native Panama and clung to his Colombian allegiance. The verdict is of the Scotch type—not proven—but the controversy still embitters partisan discussion. The ways of the Colombian politician are often murky and devious, but that does not justify their opponents in resorting to unfounded charges or to by-paths that are also dark and crooked.

It is a relief to commend the spirit that Colombia has subsequently shown. Since the first moments of incredulous rage that greeted the unwarranted "taking" of their isthmic department, the better class of Colombian publicists have shown unexpected fortitude in their long wait for the American sense of justice and fair play to assert itself. Too often they have had to encounter self-seeking at home and ignorance and misrepresentation abroad, but through it all they have maintained an attitude of confident expectancy, as thoroughly removed from "expectations" of the baser sort as from unwarranted belligerency.

The intervening years have borne them little encouragement. General Reyes, soon after his administration was begun, was informed that President Roosevelt desired to make some reparation for his precipitate action at Panama. This hopeful but unexpected news brought Doctor Diego Mendoza Pérez to Washington, in a temper to settle the unfortunate dispute advantageously for both countries. Unauthorized meddling at both capitals forced his recall. His successor negotiated with Mr. Root, shortly before the latter left our state department, a treaty so unacceptable to the people of Colombia that it proved the undoing of the Reyes administration.

In his attempts to deal with Colombia, Secretary Knox was still less fortunate. His heralded tour to Central

America really had Colombia as its chief objective point, if we may trust current rumor, but before he left Washington, the Colombian minister pointedly informed him that such a visit would be unwelcome. Possibly that minister and Doctor Mendoza might have done more to propitiate the government with which they had to deal, but we must remember that in this controversy, Colombia was the aggrieved party. Later in the Taft administration the American minister at Bogotá was empowered to offer Colombia ten millions for lease of certain islands and an option on the Atrato canal route. "Is there anything else," President Restrepo asked in reply, "that the northern Colossus would like to separate us from?" Early in the Wilson régime, Doctor Restrepo's representative signed with Secretary Bryan a fairly acceptable treaty. It is this instrument that the committee on foreign relations in our Senate still holds in cold storage.

Mr. Roosevelt and his admirers speedily discovered in the treaty two cardinal objections. The first article mentioned an expression of regret for the break in friendliness. This might be construed as an apology for the Ex-President's action, little agreeable to him and his friends, nor in their estimation, in keeping with national honor. In giving utterance to these sentiments, as a prominent Colombian points out, they ignore the precedent afforded by Great Britain in the *Alabama* award. Numerous Colombians have assured the writer that without this article the treaty would be wholly unacceptable.

The third article, proposing to pay Colombia twenty-five millions, aroused more tangible and scarcely less bitter opposition. "What do we owe Colombia?" inquired most Americans, some with feigned innocence, the greater part with honest ignorance. They forthwith assume that the suggested payment represents blackmail or some indirect method of gaining the goodwill of Colombia's neighbors. We lack their approval, they agree, but they object to gaining it through reparation to Colombia. That savors of collusion. Reasoning thus they forget that our government has the Panama Railroad in its possession and that

its appurtenances and usufruct represent more than the proposed indemnity.

Patriotic officials do not care to be regarded as receivers of stolen property. Even an incensed Colombian hesitates to apply that term to any but the chief despoilers of his national domain. Some of us who are content with the shadow of legality accept the assurances of Panamanians that they gave us a clear title to the railroad, along with other concessions in the Canal Zone. At any rate they have the major portion of the ten millions that we once offered Colombia (or at least the receipted bills that represent the proceeds from that fund) and are enjoying the annual rental. We paid them what we offered Colombia, hence we assume there is no blot on our title. But every right thinking American would welcome additional assurance upon this point. He wishes to derive unalloyed satisfaction from the way we later "made the dirt fly" at Panama, but he does not care to associate too much dirt with the earlier processes.

The leading nations of the world, including nearly all Hispanic America, then acquiesced in our precipitous recognition of the Panama Republic. Their citizens have watched with interest the mighty task we forthwith undertook and have rejoiced with us in its successful completion. But beneath the complacency inspired by their silent or open approbation, some of us have persistently felt uncomfortable. We would not undo our creation on the Canal Zone; we would bring Colombia to view it with better grace.

This may be done by ratifying the treaty. Our people are not too proud to acknowledge a fault when they clearly perceive it; nor will they continue to withhold from a sister republic her just compensation. We cannot repay Colombia for her lost department but we may do much to soften the blow then inflicted on her pride. We can extend to her some of the advantages she anticipated as joint partner in the completed canal and can pay for her purloined railroad. In truth we ought to do more than the Treaty of 1914 provides. The fall in the purchasing power of the

dollar has cut in half the compensation then promised, but the prompt tender of the stipulated amount will do much to reestablish friendship between the two nations, and favorable loans will do still more.

Many Colombians look with disfavor upon this prospective money payment. It seems too much like bartering away their national honor, even with the accompanying expression of regret. Without that clause it is safe to say the majority of the well informed would reject the treaty *in toto*. For nearly a score of years, they aver, they have worried along without the indemnity. Today they have in large measure gained the political poise and financial stability they then lacked. They have achieved this gain with little outside assistance, and they now affect to despise any such aid whatever, even when it is justly due them.

Others are less uncompromising idealists. An indemnity, they say, is a very practical sort of apology, even if unaccompanied by no word of regret for past misunderstandings; and in addition they have President Wilson's assurance that their claim is just. On coast and river and mountain ridge, through forest and over vast plains they behold the thousand and one possible enterprises awaiting the stimulus of foreign capital. The twenty-five millions, paltry though the sum may seem in view of these needs, would form a nucleus for further loans. They have noted our unstinted expenditures on the canal, our stupendous loans to finance a World War; and they acknowledge, albeit with some bitterness, that in the nation commanding such resources lies their hope of immediate prosperity. To them, therefore, the indemnity is an earnest of future goodwill and to gain it they are content to lay aside pride and overlook past grievances.

The desired millions will bring with them no surcease of foreboding. Some Liberals declare that the Church is to receive forty per cent of the amount as its toll for permitting Congress to ratify the treaty. Rumor alone cannot establish the charge, but that is a detail for the Colombians to settle among themselves. Still more do the men of all parties fear the itching palm of the politician. That malady

is not confined to their land and may be fought both here and there by a full and frank understanding accompanied by the utmost publicity in expenditure. This would be preferable to an arrangement for making the prospective payment in material rather than in money, as some suggest. We are sure of a good market in Colombia, when we once remove a strong pretext for trading elsewhere.

The question is one of international morality, not of commercial expansion. Once we thoroughly grasp this idea we shall not officially concern ourselves how they spend an indemnity long overdue. There is a multitude of uses for it, but we may rest assured their leaders will regard its expenditure as a test of national responsibility. After all these years the transaction will attract enough attention to deter waste or misappropriation of the funds. It is for us to clear our own reputation. Then we can take greater satisfaction in the Panama episode, or rather in the great work we later performed on the Isthmus, and point to the accomplishment as a universal object lesson in efficiency and world service.

During the Great War we were told that the Germans were establishing naval bases and wireless stations in Colombia. This information, if true, should not have surprised us, but we should now examine it more carefully. Colombia did not follow our lead and declare war against the Central Powers, or even break off diplomatic relations with them. She gave an asylum to refugees and her proximity to the Panama Canal might have rendered this practice a distinct menace. So much we may hold against her. On the other hand the ratification of the treaty then pending for three years would have converted her specious neutrality into welcome friendship. Expediency as well as justice counselled the reparation pact, but all arguments failed to move its opponents. To excuse their inaction, the latter spread the report that Colombia sought an alliance with the German Empire. "A grotesque humbug," later commented one of her leading publicists, "Colombia is not an adventurous country and has had very sad experience with the friendship of the powerful."

In the summer of 1919 patience seemed about to receive its reward. Credible statements appeared to the effect that the Senate committee on foreign relations was about to report favorably the long delayed treaty. At that moment the president of Colombia, in apparent good faith but with unfortunate results for his country's immediate interests, issued a decree nationalizing petroleum. This decree followed the principles of Spanish and Spanish-American law in respect to precious metals and imitated similar legislation in Mexico. As a result the treaty remained in Committee and has continued there to this day.

The incident reveals the temper of the Colombian people, and at the same time proves their fairness and self-restraint. All classes resented the least appearance of external pressure in their domestic affairs, but many persons doubted the wisdom and more questioned the legality of the president's action. The liberal press that ordinarily would have seized the occasion to make political capital, advised deliberation and coolness. One editor, indeed, suggested that in such a crisis, the chief executive should calmly consider the situation in Bogotá, rather than make it the pretext for a pious pilgrimage. The executive, the editor intimates, has been prone to yield to the "magnetism of the North Star." His policy should be "not to fall out with the 'Colossus,' nor abuse it at a distance with bravados, foolish aggressions, and suicidal hostilities," but to seek the "redemption and aggrandizement" of the country. Its existence is not "grounded on the outcome of an old negotiation nor can a plan of government base itself merely on the alms a great power can give it. . . . The Treaty," continued the editor, "neither was nor can be the axis of the administration. The latter needs a better and more skillful policy, a firm resolution to obtain legislation upon petroleum that, within the law, shall be suitable for the country . . . something that ought not to be entrusted wholly to Divine Providence and the millions of the treaty."

Mentioning the absurdity of the decree regarding petroleum and the necessity of abandoning vain hopes about the

indemnity, the editor concluded: "Our souls have been diverted by the sight of these jewels of Faust, a continuous offering to our greed, which our decency and pride should now impel us to refuse. In our country we have better riches and it is necessary to create a true nation through labor and high resolve, a nation on which no Lodge can even try to impose his will. With an attitude of resolute firmness, let us show today that we are less disposed than ever to submit to treatment that in any way is unbecoming a free nation."

This sentiment of Edwardo Santos in *El Tiempo* was generally echoed throughout the Republic, and in neighboring Ecuador. Approving correspondents wrote that national interests as well as national honor demanded that Colombia should permit the treaty to lapse and should devote herself, coolly and dispassionately, to legislation best calculated to solve the delicate petroleum problem. A fellow editor who knew well the diplomatic situation, strongly advised this course and at the same time, while warning the Colombian Congress not to mix domestic business with an unrelated negotiation, counselled that body, in view of the mistake of 1903, not hastily to recall its approval of the document of 1914, or blindly to adopt some other supercilious measure. The treaty, he demonstrated, had already accomplished its main purpose. It carries no material indemnity equal to the loss Colombia has suffered—such recompense "is beyond human and political possibility"—but it "is a historic document of moral reparation, a recognition of the violation of law." President Wilson, using the same power that President Roosevelt employed to injure Colombia, has made amends for the other's aggression.

But even this advocate of national poise did not forget what was due national honor. Any attempt to vary the indemnity offered should be resisted, not because it is the essential part of the treaty, but because it is not seemly to haggle over this point five years after the pact has been signed. Moreover, if the American Senate insists upon striking out the article containing the expression, "sincere

regret," Colombia should respectfully suggest the renunciation of the whole indemnity. Twenty-five millions is simply the value of one Colombia coffee crop and the actual prospective market afforded by six millions of people is not to be despised, so the nation can afford to be dignified and discreet. In view of Colombia's attitude since 1903, and the recent expressions of Mr. Wilson about the justice of her claims, such a course would place the Senate of the United States in a most unevitable position.

Not all *El Tiempo's* correspondents assumed such a detached attitude. One calls the indemnity a Yankee offer to chloroform the country; another writes to Santos: "As you so well said it is necessary to put an end once for all to that motive of perturbation among us, which the treaty has proved to be, and also to that cursed temptation which is able to create among us new evils, leading us to bartering away our clean heritage, the austere name and glory of the sublime past, for a miserable yoke-strap of Yankee eagles." "Dollar diplomacy," the writer averred, has been able to stir up against the country "fratricidal hands and sisterly arms." The treaty is a "manacle not a biological necessity, and bears vice in its train. The money we are to receive is not clean and the glorious days of the national celebration through which we are passing call upon us to reject it."

Another writer regretted that the Senate of the United States had such a poor opinion of national honor. Upon the mere rumor that Colombia is to confiscate property rights under a presidential decree, that body refuses to carry out its obligations. Perhaps, he intimated, this action is due to the decay of its own principle of respect for the rights of other nations, small or great. A dignified course, he reminded his countrymen, is the safest shield of weak nations. The Colossus of the North sought the treaty of April 6, 1914, because some of its statesmen finally recognized that reparation was due Colombia. They were disposed to clear the wound that made them appear before the world as a people of doubtful morality. Now they refuse to ratify what they themselves sought. Very well,

let us preserve internal harmony and work together for the aggrandizement of the country. He added: "The American nation, through the unjustifiable ignorance of its leaders, judges us as an anarchic and nespotic people. It is necessary to show, with all dignity, that they are in error, and that our beloved country has won for itself, by its worthy proceedings, a distinguished place on the rôle of nations, and that it does not fear the rough strength of the powerful nor submit to unjust pretensions."

The treaty, Colombians then maintained, was an act to repair past injuries, acceptable in itself but not to be used as a club to force unjust concessions nor as a pretext for confiscations. A unanimous resolution of their Senate later declared that the property rights of American citizens were guaranteed under Article XIII of the treaty of 1846; and that Colombia would maintain those guarantees despite the fact that the United States had clearly violated Article XXXV of the same treaty, guaranteeing Colombia's territorial integrity. At the same time a committee of the Senate, in response to a memorial from the women of Bogotá, promised that they "would not subordinate to the approbation of the treaty with the United States, nor to any other interest, the integrity of their country's institutions, nor the liberty and independence of the public powers of Colombia."

In keeping with this spirit, the Colombian courts later declared the petroleum decree unconstitutional and Congress passed in its stead the present law. This legislation recognizes the private ownership of oil lands acquired before 1873, and regulates the exploitation of those subsequently acquired or still in possession of the nation. These regulations are not wholly satisfactory to actual or prospective promoters, but the latter it is rumored, will refrain from using their grievances to prevent the ratification of the treaty. If so they will avoid provoking resentment among Colombians and will quiet the fears of other nations about the Caribbean that possess oil-bearing lands.

The petroleum controversy revealed unlimited possibilities for trouble in the unratified treaty. During a stay

of two months the writer noted in the discussions of Congress last summer numerous criticisms of the United States that may be traced to the same source. The Chocó district lies next to Panama. The region contains productive mines of gold and platinum, largely controlled by American capital, and American money circulates there freely. In view of these facts, and our failure to ratify the treaty, the unsettled boundary there became a source of apprehension to Colombians. Other boundary disputes in our history, since the famous controversy over West Florida, do not tend to reassure our Hispanic-American neighbors. Colombians are perhaps unduly prone to discover signs that point to a repetition of the disgraceful events of 1903. At any rate their papers cast suspicion upon the course of the intendant in the Chocó and urged the early completion of a highway that would bind that region to the rest of the Republic.

An important banking corporation with an American name was continually the target for private and public attacks. The fall in the price of coffee and other Colombian staples, the unfavorable rate of exchange, the unsatisfactory terms upon which they were able to get imports—all these difficulties, readily explained by natural causes, were far too often attributed to Yankee malevolence. Perhaps they were able to make out a more plausible case against the chief American corporation operating in the Caribbean; certainly that corporation came in for a bitter drubbing by Congress, when that body discussed the future of its contract with the Santa Marta Railway, which the corporation controls.

The unfortunate fact is that the unratified treaty affords editors and politicians altogether too many convenient pretexts for attacking our government and people. Of course our political and commercial rivals are only too ready to discredit us, but we must assume a large part of the blame. The reading public in Colombia, not a large one, is narrow-minded, rather than unreasonable, and relatively not more chauvinistic than our own. It would be impressed by some act of transcendent moment, such as the ratification

of the treaty, but the effect of such an act will decrease with each month of unnecessary delay.

This attitude is not without its effect on their immediate neighbors. Ecuador has been wholly sympathetic throughout. Venezuela is not friendly with Colombia but has its own causes for apprehension, as does Central America and even our thinly disguised protectorate—Panama. Perhaps the most provocative act, both in arousing sympathy for the victim and antipathy against ourselves is our intervention in Santo Domingo. A brief review of one incident will serve to show an unexpected feeling of solidarity against us.

It is customary for Spanish-American republics to recognize the natal days of their neighbors by appropriate salutations. On August 16 last, the anniversary of Santo Domingo's independence, some members in both houses of the Colombian Congress, seized the occasion to criticise sharply the American policy toward the island. Those who introduced in the Chamber of Deputies the original resolution, voiced the hope that Santo Domingo might speedily recover its sovereignty, "ground under the heel of a foreign military occupation." Those of like mind in the Senate preferred that "circumstances that had deprived our Sister Republic of its sovereignty should cease to operate." Both clauses were struck out of the resolutions as finally passed. The Senate also refused to direct the Minister of Foreign Relations to send its greetings to the provisional president, Doctor Henríquez y Carbajal, now living in self-imposed exile.

"A Shameful Silence" proclaimed Eduardo Santos of *El Tiempo*. Timidity or rather inexplicable cowardice "brought about the failure of Congress to protest against the further occupation of Santo Domingo, the blackest crime yet committed by 'Yankee Imperialism' in Latin America." To the suffering people, subjected to violence, with liberties suppressed and every manifestation of free thought impeded, the colorless greetings must savor of sarcasm. Not even Colombia had suffered more than they. Their president was in exile, their officials unpaid,

their women-folk forced to offer their jewelry to keep up hospitals and other charities—all because they would not accept a treaty making their country an American protectorate. Their protest, voiced by their popular archbishop, awakened an echo even in the House of Representatives of the United States. Argentina sent a warship to salute the Dominican flag and the Parliament of Spain requested the Washington administration to release her former colony from bondage. Only Colombia, “mutilated and grieving”—Colombia, that had once “felt the pains of solitude and abandonment”—Colombia, unwilling to acknowledge that another people has suffered more than herself—Colombia, did not dare express sympathy for a people “among whom all rights have been violated and all liberties refused recognition.”

Santos is too rhetorical to carry conviction. He writes and speaks frankly and fearlessly, and his heated words on this occasion, in contrast with his cooler counsel of the previous year, may serve to measure public indignation over the failure to ratify the treaty, and other irritating happenings of the intervening months. He also may have wished to awaken his readers to a sense of their own responsibility before the common danger that threatened the Caribbean. “Not thus,” he stated categorically, “does a people preserve its right to live. . . . Precisely because danger threatens us, are we prohibited from keeping silence when neighboring peoples fall victims of the evil we fear.”

To the same effect but in more measured phrase wrote his friend, Armando Solano, of *El Espectador*. The United States is the greatest cohesive force in America, with whom Colombia needed closer relations. The northern republic could supply their country with sorely needed capital and at the same time give them lessons in moral orientation. “On its intimate side the North American people is loyal, sincere, pure, and generous. Its fireside line is patriarchal; its sentiments are pious and just.” But a “noble and spontaneous friendship” between nations must be based on self-respect, not on the rules that define servitude, vassalage, or protectorates. The people of the United States

have no wish to attract slavish admiration nor will they welcome in others such an exhibition of "shameful and sterile hesitancy," as Congress displayed. "Above all they will not rejoice to find under a slightly brunette complexion, the spirit of African subserviency."

The leading conservative organ attempted to justify the action of Congress and provoked from Santos a prompt and more scorching retort. "Miserable will be the lot of us weaker peoples," he recorded, referring to the American naval commander, "when Latin American countries recognize this usurper as chief executive of Santo Domingo." Such recognition would be "simply criminal and would make us accomplices" in the offense committed against that people. "No," he concluded, "let us fold up this page inspired by the fear of certain parliamentarians—this page around which [our associate] has written so strange a border."

Augustín Nieto Caballero continued the discussion in *El Espectador*: "In an idealistic people like our own," he placidly wrote, "one will always encounter an echo of protest against force or a fraternal word for the fallen, although neither the one nor the other answers any practical end, although because of obvious conditions both are simply platonic." Such an expression from those who most "feel the fate of the captive isle" will inform her leaders that "a noble people of America accompanies her people in their *via crucis*," and will create a salutary impression elsewhere. But this expression need not be official any more than the corresponding resolutions about Ireland so common in the United States.

Santos countered by noting that Ireland had never been free, as had Santo Domingo. He also republished the protest, issued in 1856 by the minister of foreign relations of New Granada, when the United States recognized in Nicaragua a government supported by William Walker, the filibuster. This document, kindly supplied by Doctor Diego Mendoza Pérez, Colombia's representative in Washington in 1906, was a "marvellous note which condenses with insuperable grace the sentiments and well being of a

weak American nation. . . . It is a page of gold which may be read with pride, when thinking of what we were, and with sadness, when noting what occurred, yesterday and today. It is a lesson from the past that we ought to receive with respect and it should teach us the only procedure by which a free people can fulfill its destiny."

His fellow of *El Espectador* agreed that Santos spoke for the vast majority of the Colombians; but insisted that in such matters their officials must keep a "sense of proportion." A quixotic declaration by Colombia alone will not aid Santo Domingo. If the country really wished to do something worth while, let her ministers exert themselves to bring about a collective note, signed by all the chanceries of the continent.

Santos' "Last Words" showed more resentment than conviction. "This is the supreme outrage, committed by Yankee Imperialism in Latin America," he reiterated. "The loyal sons of the Dominican Republic struggle unceasingly to end that outrage, to terminate that scandalous occupation. We have asked that the Congress of Colombia lift up her voice in behalf of their sacred cause and by so doing bring into relief the solidarity that should exist among sister nations, menaced by the same danger. We have believed that such a course was rigidly in accord with the principles of American international law and conducive to the well-being of all countries bordering on the Caribbean."

Yet he had only provoked ironical comparisons. "Let the tiger consume us one by one," he bitterly concluded. "When the lot falls to a neighbor we will maintain serene composure so as to afford no occasion for laughing at our manifestations of indignation or surprise. If the fatal day arrives for us, let us remember to ask no aid or sympathy from people of our own race, not from any one, and certainly not from the God of Nations, who, it seems, is a decided partisan of the law of majorities."

In answer the editor of *El Espectador* reiterates his doctrine of expediency. At the beginning of the occupation a protest from Colombia would have been in order; made

now, after the people of the United States have promised to restore the sovereignty of Santo Domingo, and while they are in the midst of a presidential campaign, its only effect would be to arouse the hostility of the entire nation and defeat the treaty that means so much to Colombia.

The writer is as patriotic as his colleague. "We feel what he feels and if we were in a position to challenge the colossus, we should favor the organization of an expedition to liberate Santo Domingo, with the same romantic and beautiful ideals that inspired the Crusades. But as we are unequal to such a task, we prefer to show our deep sympathy for our captive brothers through the press without exposing our country in a most noble but imprudent manner to reprisals that we could not measure until it should be altogether too late."

Nieto Caballero spoke wisely, but even his moderate phrases contain few words of approval for the United States. His contemporaries have even fewer for that nation or for their own hesitant congress. A popular cartoon represents the membership of that body as a decrepit old gentleman in the posture of a mule. Astride him is Uncle Sam, dangling at a safe distance before his nose a plethoric sack, labelled "Twenty-five millions." Above is the title, "The Reason for the Servility of Congress."

This exchange of editorial pleasantries, like so many other untoward events of the past few months, hinged on the unratified treaty. Few questions involving our country with Colombia or her neighbors can escape similar perversion. The fault may not rest wholly with us, but past acts affords a pretext for a display of resentment that present inaction merely serves to strengthen. Our marines, the press assures us, will shortly evacuate Santo Domingo. Our president-elect, we learn from the same source, favors the payment of the indemnity to Colombia. These acts will prove welcome to expectant nations along the Caribbean, but we should not become impatient if the people of those lands do not at once lose all traces of resentment and fear. Time and tactful treatment alone can obliterate those scars, but we shall act worthily to that end, if with out further delay, we ratify the long-pending treaty.